THE CAUSE and CURE OF Strife and Divisions.

Being the Substance of

Two SERMONS,

PREACH'D

In *London*, *March* the 12th and 26th, 1695.

By *RICHARD MAYO*,

Minister of God's Word.

ob. 11 Sept. 1695. Mr Matth. Taylor Preached his funeral Sermon

Blessed are the Peace-makers, Matth. 5. 9.

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Printed for *Thomas Parkhurst*, at the Bible and Three Crowns, near *Mercers Chappel*, at the lower-end of *Cheap-side*, 1695.

TO THE
READER.

THE following Sermons were Compos'd (as ſome very well know) under the diſadvantage of a great hurry of Affairs, wherein I was unavoidably engag'd. I had not the leaſt thought of Printing them, when I Preach'd them: But ſome that heard them, (being induc'd more, as I ſuppoſe, by the ſeaſonableneſs of the Subject, than any thing elſe) importun'd me ſo to do; and when Entreaties could not prevail, they threatned me into an unwilling compliance, by declaring their fixed Reſolutions of doing it for me: Hereupon I was loth that theſe Sermons ſhould be thruſt forth into the World by their hands, and ſo have their Errata's, as well as my own Imperfections, to anſwer for.

I am not ſo vain as to think, that others will receive them as favourably altogether as ſome heard them; but yet, I hope, they will be entertain'd with ſomewhat of that charity: The recommending of which, is the deſign of them, and of

R. M.

BOOKS *Printed for* Tho. Parkhurſt, *at the Bible and Three Crowns near* Mercers Chappel, *at the lower-end of* Cheap-ſide.

1. THE Life and Death of *Edmund Staunton*, D.D. To which is added, Firſt, His Treatiſe of Chriſtian Conference. Secondly, His Dialogue betwixt a Miniſter and a Stranger.

2. A Plain Anſwer to this Practical Queſtion, *What courſe may a Chriſtian take to have his Heart quickned and enlarged in Secret Prayer?*

3. Two Conferences; One, Betwixt a *Papiſt* and a *Jew*. The other, Betwixt a *Proteſtant* and a *Jew*. In two Letters. Theſe three publiſhed by Mr. *Richard Mayo*.

4. Free Juſtification by Chriſt. Written in *Latin*, by *John Fox*, Author of the *Book of Martyrs*. Tranſlated into *Engliſh* for the benefit of thoſe who love their Souls, and would not miſtake in ſo great a Point.

5. The Carnality of Religious Contention. In two Sermons.

6. Charity, in Reference to other Mens Sins. Both by Mr. *John How*, Miniſter of the Goſpel.

7. A Diſcourſe, The Deſign of which is, To revive Love among Proteſtants of all Perſwaſions. By *Nathaniel Vincent*, Miniſter of the Goſpel.

8. The Little Peace-maker, diſcovering Fooliſh Pride, the Make-bate. By *Charles Morton*, Miniſter of the Goſpel.

9. The Kingdom of God among Men. A Tract of the Sound State of Religion, or that Chriſtianity which is deſcribed in the Holy Scriptures. By *John Corbet*, late Miniſter of the Goſpel.

10. Church Concord: Containing, Firſt, Diſſwaſives from unneceſſary Diviſions, and the real Concord of Moderate Independents with Presbyterians. Secondly, The Terms neceſſary for Concord among all true Churches and Chriſtians. By Mr. *Richard Baxter*.

THE CAUSE and CURE OF DIVISIONS.

1 COR. III. v.

For whereas there is among you Envying, and Strife and Divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as Men?

THE Apostle *Paul*, as he travelled from place to place, preaching the Kingdom of God, he came to the ancient City of *Corinth*, the Metropolis of *Achaia*, now call'd *Morea*, and there he tarried *a Year and six Months*. The reason (it may be) of his long stay in that City was this, God had told him in a Vision, that he *had much people in that place, and that he would be with him there.* Here he *planted* a famous Church, which was afterwards *water'd* by *Apollo.* A Church that came behind no other in Spiritual Gifts, *they were enrich'd in all utterance and all knowledge.* Nevertheless, in this fair Garden there

ſprang up many noxious Weeds, ſuch as *Paul* never planted and *Apollo* never water'd, and to be ſure God never bleſs'd.

Particularly, the Text tells us, there *were envying, ſtrife and diviſions amongſt them*; they were broken and crumbled into Parties and Factions, ſome ſaid *they were of Paul*, and others ſaid *they were of Apollo*: and hereby they made it appear, *that they were carnal, and walk'd as Men.* So much ſhall ſerve for the contexture of theſe words.

In the Text it ſelf, you may take notice of a Crimination and of an Interrogation. The Crimination is in the former part of the Verſe, *there are amongſt you envying, ſtrife and diviſions.* The Interrogation is in the latter part, ſeeing it is ſo with you, *are ye not carnal, and walk as Men?*

He lays three things to the charge of theſe *Corinthians.*

The firſt is *envying*, or *envy*, (ζῆλος,) the word is ſometimes us'd in a good ſence, but here it is to be taken in a bad ſence. So it is alſo in the 13th Chapter of this Epiſtle, *v.* 4. and in 2 *Cor.* 12. 20. and in many other places. In the Epiſtle of *James*, the Epithet πικρὸς is added to it, which we render *bitter envying.*

The ſecond Evil that he chargeth theſe *Corinthians* with is *ſtrife*, (ἔρις,) the word is rendred *contention* in 1 *Cor.* 1. 11. there he ſays, that it had been declared to him, that *there were contentions among them.* It ſeems, there was not only envying in their Hearts, but that brake out into contentious words and actions.

The third Evil is *diviſions*, (διχοστασίαι) the word is rendred *ſeditions*, in *Gal.* 5. 20. and in the Margent of your Bibles there 'tis rendred *factions.* Theſe are the three evil Diſtempers that did rage, if they did not reign, amongſt the *Corinthans.*

Hereupon the Apoſtle doth ſharply interrogate and reprehend

prehend them: Seeing theſe Evils are found among you, *Are ye not carnal and walk as Men?* Let me ſpeak a little to each of theſe Phraſes. *Are ye not carnal?* are not theſe things works of the fleſh? and don't they argue you to be carnal and fleſhly? his way of ſpeaking hath a quickneſs in it. Thrice he puts this Queſtion to them in the compaſs of two Verſes: But how is it to be underſtood? In the firſt Chapter he calls them *Saints*, and ſays they *were ſanctify'd in Chriſt Jeſus*; how is it then, that he tells them here *they were carnal?* To this, I anſwer, They were ſo comparatively. If they were compar'd with more ſpiritual Chriſtians, then they were but carnal: As one of competent knowledge, if he be compar'd to a great Scholar, he is but ignorant; there is Fleſh in thoſe that are regenerate, as well as Spirit, the one *luſts*, or *wars againſt the other*. And ſo far as the Fleſh prevails in God's own Children, they may be ſaid to be carnal.

It follows, *Do ye not walk as Men?* Why, how would the Apoſtle have them walk? Not as meer Men, but as Chriſtians and as Saints. It is as if he had ſaid, It doth not become you, who are Saints, and call'd out of the World, to walk as the Men of the World walk, and to do as they do. If they be envious, you muſt not be envious; if they are contentious and quarrelſom, you muſt not be contentious and quarrelſom. They that are Saints and would be ſo accounted, they muſt behave themſelves as more than meer Men.

Thus I have a little diſcanted upon the Terms in the Text. There are three Obſervations that are obvious to every Eye.

Obſ. 1. That Envy, or Envying, is the Cauſe and Companion of Strife and Diviſions.

Obſ. 2. That Strife and Diviſions are often found in

the Churches of Chriſt, and among particular Chriſtians.

Obſ. 3. That ſo far as theſe prevail in any, they are carnal and walk as Men.

'Tis the ſecond of theſe Obſervations that I ſhall inſiſt upon, and in the handling thereof I ſhall touch a little upon the firſt and the third. This then is the Point before us,

That *Strife and Diviſions are often found in the Churches of Chriſt, and among particular Chriſtians.* This is a Doctrine that you ſhould Hear, and we ſhould Preach, with weeping Eyes, and with broken Hearts.

Let this be premis'd, That I ſhall not meddle with Civil Contentions, ſuch as are in Kingdoms and Commonwealths: But with Religious (or, rather, Irreligious) Contentions and Diviſions, ſuch as are in Churches and amongſt particular Chriſtians: And theſe are of two ſorts, either when Chriſtians differ in Doctrine and Opinion, or elſe when, though they agree pretty well in Opinion, yet they break the Bonds of Love and Peace, they fall into Factions and Parties, and live in Malice and Uncharitableneſs; having (as one expreſſeth it) Rancour in their Hearts, Revilings in their Mouths, Rage and Rudeneſs in their Carriage, one towards another. Thus it was in the Church of *Corinth*, and amongſt theſe *Corinthians*. The Apoſtle tells them, 1 *Cor.* 11. 18. that he heard there were Diviſions amongſt them, (σχίσματα) Schiſms and Rents. And then again, in 1 *Cor.* 1. 11. he tells them it *was declar'd to him by them of the Houſe of* Chloe, (You ſee he tells them from whom he had this Relation, he quotes his Authors.) *that there were contentions among them,* (ἔριδες) *ſtrifes and quarrels.* And then again, in the Text he tells them, that there were not only ſtrifes and contentions, but *diviſions*

and

and factions among them. And in the next Verſe he doth particularize and inſtance in ſome of theſe Diviſions and Factions; ſome of them ſaid they were *of Paul*, and others they were *of Apollo*. He doth not here find fault with their reſpecting one Miniſter more than another: it can't be otherwiſe, but Chriſtians muſt needs eſteem them moſt by whom they receive moſt good, by whoſe Miniſtry they have been converted and brought home to God. How could theſe *Corinthians* but honour *Paul*, when *Paul* himſelf ſaith in the next Chapter, that he had *begotten them through the Goſpel*, and if they had *never ſo many inſtructers, yet he was their Father*. Again, It is not poſſible but Chriſtians ſhould reſpect ſome Miniſters more than others, becauſe of their relation to them, and becauſe of their excelling Gifts and Graces, and the like.

You'l ſay then, Where lay the fault of theſe *Corinthians*, when ſome of them ſaid they *were of Paul*, and others of them *they were of Apollo?* Why their fault ſeems to lye in this, that they cry'd up *Paul* and *Apollo* in a factious ſiding way. They had (it may be) *their perſons in admiration*; they made them Heads of Parties, and were ready to call themſelves after their Names; 'tis as if ſome had ſaid, they were *Paul*'s Diſciples; and others had ſaid, they were *Apollo*'s Diſciples and Followers. Though here they are brought in ſaying no more than *we are of Paul*, and *we are of Apollo*, yet doubtleſs there were divers of them that upon occaſion did enlarge themſelves upon this ſubject. Methinks I hear a factious *Corinthian* ſpeaking in this wiſe.

Oh, what an incomparable Perſon or Preacher is *Paul!* How am I raviſh'd with the gracious words that come out of his mouth! Next to the ſeeing of Chriſt in the fleſh, there is nothing more to be deſir'd than to hear *Paul* from the Pulpit: He ſpeaks as if he had a Window into the Hearts

Hearts of his Hearers, as if he were within a Man, and ſupply'd the place of Conſcience: He is a true Goſpel-Preacher; how ſweetly doth he diſplay the Grace, the free Grace of God, and the *unſearchable Riches of Chriſt.*

As for *Apollo*, he's a meer Flaſh, a tinkling Cymbal; and let me tell you withal, that he is an *Arminian*, a legal Preacher, one that preacheth nothing but Works. Well, for my part, I am of *Paul*, I am his Diſciple. *Apollo* is not worthy to be nam'd the ſame day with him.

Another ſays, when he has done: Well, commend me to *Apollo*; for my part, I am of *Apollo*. He is (ἀνὴρ λογιὸς,) an eloquent Perſon, a moſt rhetorical and golden-mouth'd Preacher; he charms his Hearers, and chains their Ears to his Lips; by the fluency and variety of his Expreſſions, he doth captivate their Hearts and Affections. Moreover, he is (ζέων τῷ πνεύματι) *fervent in ſpirit*; he hath not ſuch a drowſie, dreaming way of Preaching, as ſome Men have. Sometimes he is a *Boanerges*, a *Son of Thunder*, and ſometimes he is a *Barnabas*, a *Son of Conſolation*. As for *Paul*, though he be call'd an Apoſtle, he is but a dull Preacher in compariſon; though his *Writings are weighty*, yet *his Speech is contemptible.*

And beſides this, I muſt tell you, he is an *Antinomean*; he cries down the *righteouſneſs of the Law*, and makes light of perſonal and inherent Righteouſneſs. Well, let who will be of *Paul*, I am of *Apollo*, I am one of his Diſciples. I don't ſay, that ſuch as this is the Language of any of the Citizens of *London*; but this or ſuch like was the Language of the Citizens of *Corinth.*

The factiouſneſs of theſe *Corinthians* is farther exemplify'd by that parallel place in 1 *Cor.* 1. 12. there you read how *every one of them ſaid, I am of* Paul, *and I of* Apollo, *and I of* Cephas, *and I of Chriſt.* By *every one of them*, he means many or ſeveral of them. Here are two more mention'd

tion'd than were before, and they are *Cephas* and *Chriſt*. By *Cephas*, is meant *Peter*. We don't read, that he was ever at *Corinth*; how then came he to be in ſuch requeſt among the *Corinthians*? To this it is ſaid, that ſome of the *Corinthians*, who believ'd in Jeſus Chriſt, were *Jews*, and becauſe *Peter* was the Apoſtle of the Circumciſion, therefore they magnify'd him, and ſaid they were his Diſciples. But what did they mean, who ſaid they were *of Chriſt*? This is commendable in perſons, to call themſelves after his Name, to own themſelves to be his Diſciples; 'tis no fault in a Man to call Chriſt *Maſter*, and to profeſs himſelf a Chriſtian. Therefore ſome of the Ancients did put a good ſence upon this Clauſe: *Chryſoſtom* thinks this was *Paul's* own ſaying, *I am of Chriſt*.

But all our modern Expoſitors, with good reaſon, do cenſure them alſo who ſaid they were of Chriſt, becauſe they ſpoke it factiouſly and ſchiſmatically; they ſaid they were of, or for Chriſt, in oppoſition to his Miniſters; they pretended to the immediate teachings of Chriſt, and had no need of the Miniſtry of ſuch as *Paul*, *Apollo*, or *Cephas*. This is the manner of ſome in our days, and it might be the way and manner of ſome in thoſe days to deſpiſe the Miniſtry and Ordinances of Chriſt, under a pretext of the immediate enjoyment of Chriſt, and inſpirations of his Spirit.

I meet with ſome Expoſitors that give this farther account of thoſe who ſaid they were of Chriſt, and ſo came under the Apoſtle's reprehenſion: they were ſuch as did appropriate Chriſt to themſelves, and thoſe of their own perſwaſion; ſo the *Donatiſts* of old are ſaid to do. But whither have I been carried with tracing the footſteps of theſe factious *Corinthians*? Let me return to what I was upon, that is, to ſhew you the commonneſs of Contentions and Diviſions in Churches, and among particular Chriſtians.

It

It was much after the ſame manner at *Rome*, as it was at *Corinth:* the believing *Romans* had their Quarrels and Contentions about *obſerving of Days*, and *eating of Meats:* See the whole Fourteenth Chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*; the differences amongſt them did grow to a very great heighth, *the ſtronger ſort did deſpiſe the weaker, and the weaker ſort did judge and cenſure the ſtronger.* The like Diviſions and Differences there were amongſt the *Galathians.* The Moſaical Ceremonies were a Bone of Contention among them; about theſe and other things they ſnarled ſo long, till they were ready to *bite and devour one another*, and were in danger *to be conſumed one of another*, *V.* Gal. 5. 15. The *Epheſians* alſo were not free from theſe Contentions and Factions: *Of their own ſelves did Men ariſe, ſpeaking perverſe things, and drawing away Diſciples after them*, *Acts* 20. 30. In other Churches matters were much at the ſame paſs, as I might ſhew you; and this happened (as one obſerves) whil'ſt the Blood of Chriſt was yet warm, and ſeveral of the Apoſtles were yet alive. And as there were theſe Janglings and Contentions in Churches, ſo alſo they were not wanting amongſt particular Chriſtians: What a falling out was there betwixt *Paul* and and *Barnabas?* There was ſuch a Paroxiſm, ſo *ſharp a Contention* betwixt them, that they could not keep company together, but they *departed aſunder one from another.* In the primitive times, the Chriſtians were no ſooner deliver'd from the bloody Perſecution of their Enemies, but they fell a perſecuting one another. *Socrates* tells us, in his Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, how, when *Conſtantine* came to the *Nicene* Council, the Members of that Council were quarelling together and libelling one another, to the great grief of that good Emperor. *Chryſoſtom* and *Epiphanius* were ſo angry one with another, that *Epiphanius* wiſh'd, that *Chryſoſtom* might never die a Biſhop; and *Chryſoſtom* wiſh'd,

wiſh'd, that *Epiphanius* might never go home alive: And it fell out to both accordingly. *Jerom* and *Ruffinus*, who were once very intimate and great Friends, by and by they fell out, and were at Daggers draw; they rail'd and wrote one againſt another. *Auſtin* writing to *Jerom* about this matter, he bewails it with very pathetical Expreſſions: *Wo is me*, (ſaith he) *that I can't meet you two together; I would fall down at your feet, and beg of you, for your own ſakes, for Chriſt and his Churches ſake, that you would be reconcil'd one to another.*

In later times, Chriſtians were no ſooner crept out of Popiſh Darkneſs and Superſtition, but they fell together by the ears amongſt themſelves: What bitter Strife and Contentions were there betwixt *Luther* and *Zwinglius*, and many others of the eminent Reformers. So that Unity is no infallible Mark of a true Church: There may (as one ſays well) be Unity out of the Church of Chriſt; and, on the other hand, Contention and Diviſion may be in it.

Give me leave a little to enquire into the Cauſes of Contentions and Diviſions, that are in Churches and among particular Chriſtians.

1. The firſt great cauſe hereof is the Devil; you may plainly ſee his cloven foot in them; he is that *envious one* that ſows the Seeds of Diſcord in the Field of the Church; he labours to keep his own Kingdom in Peace, and to cauſe Commotions and Diviſions in the Kingdom of Chriſt: like a *Salamander*, he likes to live in the Fire of Contention. Though we uſe to ſpeak of the Devil in the Singular Number, yet there is a Plurality of Devils, an innumerable company of thoſe wicked Spirits, whoſe main province it is to promote Contentions amongſt God's People. I doubt not but there be Legions of them in *London*, who attend at this day upon this very Service. They put Enmity betwixt Chriſtians and Chriſtians, they fill them with Envy-

ing, Striſe and Diviſions. Some ſay, the Devils cauſe Storms and Tempeſts in the Air: Sure I am, theſe bluſtering Storms of Contention, that are in the Chriſtian World at this day, and particularly in *England* and *London*, are rais'd by theſe Evil Spirits.

As the Devil hath his Angels, ſo he hath his Agents alſo among the Children of Men, who puſh forward theſe Contentions and Diviſions: All Places are full of ſuch *Boute-feus*. The Scripture calls them (διάβολοι) Devils, who by their Lies and Slanders, and ſuch like means, do *ſow Diſcord among Brethren.*

2. Chriſtians themſelves are the cauſes of their Contentions; as the Lord ſaid of the *Iſraelites*, that their *deſtruction was of themſelves:* So I may ſay of Chriſtians, their Diviſions are of and from themſelves. I might here ſhew you how their different Education, their different Intereſts, their different Tempers and Conſtitutions, do occaſion Diviſions amongſt themſelves and one another: but let me rather ſhew you how their unmortify'd Corruptions are the main cauſes hereof. Theſe divide Men from God, and from one another alſo. *James* 4. 1. There the Apoſtle asks a Queſtion, and reſolves it himſelf: *From whence come Wars and Fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your Luſts, that war in your Members?* The Interrogation hath the force of an Affirmation; it is as if he had ſaid they do certainly come from thence. This is true, not only of thoſe Wars and Fightings that are in Kingdoms and amongſt Princes, but of thoſe Janglings and Contentions that are in Churches and amongſt particular Chriſtians.

Let me inſtance in ſome particular Luſts and Corruptions, that are the great Make-bates in the World and in the Church.

1. The

1. The firſt is *Envying*, or *Envy*. This, as I hinted before, is the Parent of Strife and Diviſion. Hence 'tis, that Envy and Strife are ſo often coupled together in Scripture, it is becauſe the one is the companion and cauſe of the other. The firſt ſtrife and contention we read of in the World was betwixt *Cain* and *Abel*; and what occaſion'd it, but Envy? 'Tis ſaid of *Joſeph's* Brethren, that they envy'd him, and therefore they could not ſpeak peaceably unto him. Moſt of thoſe Debates and Contentions that are in Men and Chriſtians, do ſpring from this bitter Root. The Churches of Chriſt are cut in pieces, (like the *Levite's* Wife) by the envy of thoſe that are the Members thereof. There is a Spirit in good Men themſelves that luſteth unto Envy; and, where this is predominant, there is *nothing that can ſtand before it.*

2. A ſecond Luſt is *Pride*. Theſe two, Envy and Pride, are Worms that breed in the ſweeteſt Roſes. The later of theſe is as productive of Diviſions as the former. *Solomon* ſays, *Prov.* 13. 10. That *only by Pride comes Contention.* By *only*, is meant *chiefly*. If there be no cauſe of contention, yet Pride will occaſion it: Proud perſons are always quarrelſom, like gouty and ſwollen Legs, they keep at a diſtance one from another.

3. A third is *Paſſion*. Anger and Striſe are near a kin. *Prov.* 29. 22. *Solomon* there ſays, *An angry Man ſtirreth up ſtrife.* You had the ſame before, in *Prov.* 15. 18. Paſſionate perſons diſturb the Peace of the places where they live, and the Societies to which they do belong.

4. A fourth is *Covetouſneſs*. This is the *root of all Evil*, and more particularly of Striſe and Diviſion. One ſays, that *Meum & Tuum*, make all the ſtir that is in the World. The ſweetneſs of Lucre amongſt Men, and Chriſtians too, is likened by another to Hony that is ſet before Bears, they will fight and tear one anothers Throats out to come at it.

5. A fifth is *Self-ſeeking*. This is the great Incendiary in Church and State, it ſets Men and Chriſtians together by the ears; they that ſeek and love themſelves, are ready upon all occaſions to fall out with others.

6. A ſixth is *Tale-bearing*. This is grown an Epidemical Evil, and it is the cauſe of much contention; it *ſeparates very Friends*. *Solomon* ſays, *Prov.* 26. 20. *Where no Wood is, there Fire goeth out; ſo where there is no Tale-bearer, the Striſe ceaſeth.*

7. The ſeventh is *Evil Surmiſing*. You read of this in 1 *Tim.* 6. 4. and there 'tis coupled with Striſe and Railing, and 'tis one great occaſion of it. By Evil Surmiſing, is meant groundleſs Jealouſie and Suſpicion. This is contrary to Chriſtian Charity, which *thinks no evil*, which *believes and hopes all things*, and takes every thing by the beſt handle.

3. What if I ſhould add, in the third place, That God hath a hand in thoſe Diviſions that are amongſt his People. 'Tis very plain, that his hand was in that Diviſion which was between the two, and the ten Tribes of *Iſrael*: Read 1 *Kings* 12. 24. There the Lord tells *Rehoboam* and the Houſe of *Judah* and *Benjamin*, *Ye ſhall not go up, nor fight againſt your Brethren, the Children of Iſrael, for this thing is from me.* Compare this with the 15th Verſe of the ſame Chapter. Our Saviour tells his Hearers, there muſt *be Scandals or Offences*; and the Apoſtle *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, there *muſt be Hereſies*; and it may as well be ſaid, there muſt be Diviſions. God doth not only permit, but, for wiſe Reaſons, he doth appoint and ordain them; he doth it that the approv'd may be made manifeſt, that the Graces of his People may be try'd and exercis'd. He orders it thus in judgment to wicked Men. Diviſions amongſt the godly, are a ſtone of ſtumbling unto the ungodly. God ſaid in the Old Teſtament, and 'tis cited in the New: *Behold, I lay, in Zion, a Stumbling-ſtone.* Wicked ſinners rejoyce

rejoyce at the diviſion of God's People; 'tis Nuts to them to ſee theſe quarelling and contending with one another. But this (it may be) will coſt them dear, it may occaſion their ſtumbling, and falling, and the breaking of their Necks.

Thus you have ſeen the Cauſe, but what is the Cure of theſe Contentions and Diviſions in the Churches of Chriſt and among particular Chriſtians? Let me ſpeak a little to this, and I think it may be a word in ſeaſon. The Chriſtians in *Corinth* were not more divided and ſhatter'd, than the Chriſtians in *London* are at this day. What *Jeremy* ſaith of the *Iſraelites*, that may be ſaid of us: *Our Wounds are grievous, our Bruiſes are incurable, and we have no healing Medicines*; there is *no Balm in our Giliad, nor Phyſician in our Climate.* I have heard of a Diſeaſe, that is call'd *Opprobrium Medicorum*, The Diſgrace of Phyſicians; becauſe they do not know what to ſay or do to it. I may ſay of this evil Diſeaſe, call'd Contention and Diviſion, it is *Opprobrium Theologorum*, The Diſgrace of Divines; they know not what to ſay or do, in order to the healing of it. Once a Year there is commonly a Diſeaſe in *London* which is epidemical and raging, but Diviſion is a Diſtemper that rageth and is rampant among us all the Year long, and there is no ſtopping of it. Nevertheleſs, I ſhall preſcribe ſomething that may have a tendency to the Cure hereof. *Proſper me, O Lord, I pray thee at this time*, and let my Words be acceptable to theſe thy Servants; may they profit by them themſelves, and may they, as there is occaſion, communicate them unto others.

All that I ſhall ſay (at leaſt for the preſent) upon this Subject ſhall be reduc'd to two general Heads.

1. Be you throughly perſwaded and convinced of the great Evil that is in Striſe and Diviſion. This one Perſwaſion

ſion and Conviction is enough to keep a Child of God, a godly Man or Woman, from being concern'd therein. I obſerve the generality of Profeſſors are ready to think, that there is no evil in Contention and Diviſion; but, as *Jonah* ſaid, *he did well to be angry:* ſo they are apt to ſay, they do well to contend and divide; they behave themſelves ſo, as if they thought it to be their Duty and not their Sin. When they are exhorted to mortifie and put away Strife and Diviſion, they are ready to ſay, as *Pilate* in another caſe, Why, what evil hath it done? or what evil can it do? Lying and Swearing, Drunkenneſs and Uncleanneſs, theſe and ſuch like, are Evils and groſs Evils, but what evil is there in Contention and Diviſion? Now, for the conviction of ſuch, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew you the great evil that is therein: And the Lord ſet it home upon our Hearts.

1. Contentions and Diviſions they are from the Fleſh that dwelleth in us; that is the bitter root from whence they ſpring. Hence 'tis that the *Corinthians*, ſo far as theſe prevail'd in them, are ſaid to be *carnal* or *fleſhly*, to have more Fleſh than Spirit in them. Hence 'tis alſo, that they are call'd Works of the Fleſh, *Gal.* 5. 20. There the Apoſtle reckons up many manifeſt Works of the Fleſh, and among them he rangeth *Variance*, *Strife*, *Emulations*, and *Seditions*, which is the very word that is rendred *Diviſions* here in my Text. This one thing were enough to ſhew the great evil that is in Strife and Diviſion, that they are Works of the Fleſh, and reckon'd among the moſt notorious Sins; ſuch as Fornication, Adultery, Witchcraft, Idolatry, Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and the like.

2. Contentions and Diviſions (eſpecially ſuch as are in Churches and amongſt Chriſtians) are expreſly forbidden in the Holy Scriptures: Read what the Apoſtle ſays to the *Corinthians*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 10. *I beſeech*, or I exhort you, *Brethren*,

thren, by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that there be no Diviſions among you. There are many Precepts and Commands in Scripture for Peace, Love, and Union, and in all theſe there are Prohibitions of Strife and Diviſions. The Apoſtle *Paul* requires the believing *Romans* and *Theſſalonians*, to be *of one mind, and to live in peace:* he exhorts the *Coloſſians*, that *the peace of God may rule in their hearts, to the which they are call'd in one body.* Our Saviour himſelf hath told his Diſciples, *Mark* 9. *ult.* that he would have them *to have ſalt in themſelves, and to be at peace one with another:* that is, he would have them ſavoury and peaceable Chriſtians.

What a ſolemn Charge doth he give them as to this particular, *John* 13. 34. *A New Commandment* (ſays he) *do I give to you, that ye love one another.* 'Tis as if he had ſaid, I will have this Command, though it be as old as any other, to be accounted new, to be call'd my Command, and to go under my Name, that when ever any Strife ſhould begin to kindle among you, the remembrance of this particular Charge or Command of mine may be the more apt to quench it: And 'tis worth your marking, that he doth not only give them this Commandment, but to make it the more effectual, he annexeth a powerful Argument to it, and that is his loving them, I charge you, *that as I have loved you, ſo alſo that you love one another.* Oh, what will not the love of Chriſt conſtrain Chriſtians to do! It will prevail with them (as there is occaſion) to lay down their Lives: Surely then it will prevail with them to lay down their Contentions and Diviſions. One thing more I would obſerve, That our Saviour, in this laſt Sermon of his to his Diſciples, doth again and again mind them of this very thing, you have much the ſame words, *John* 15. 12. *This is my Commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.* And again, Verſe 17. *Theſe things I command you,*

that

that ye love one another. This is no tautology in our Saviour; it did not ariſe from want of Matter, but from the weightineſs of the Subject; he laid a great ſtreſs upon this Commandment, therefore he ſo often repeats it. Now this ſhews the greatneſs of this Sin of Contention and Diviſion, that is is ſo directly contrary to ſuch expreſs and renewed Precepts.

3. Contentions and Diviſions are contrary to the Prayer of Chriſt; yea, to that Prayer which he made ſo publickly and ſolemnly in the hearing of his Diſciples. What he inſiſted on ſo much in Preaching, he enlargeth on in Prayer likewiſe. Peace was the Legacy he left his Diſciples, and Peace was the Bleſſing he deſires the Father to beſtow upon them. He ſays, *John* 17. 11. *Holy Father, keep, through thine own Name, thoſe whom thou haſt given me.* Keep them; Why, and for what? See what follows, *That they may be one, as we are.* As if he had ſaid, Father, there is a perfect agreement betwixt us, we never had any difference; let there therefore be the like concord and agreement betwixt my Followers, as there is betwixt me and thee; let them be one, as we are. And as he pray'd thus for his more immediate Diſciples, ſo he requeſted the ſame for and in behalf of them who in after-times ſhould believe in him through their Word. So you'l find a little lower, in the 21ſt and the 23d Verſe of that 17th of *John.* It is as if he had ſaid, I know, that my Followers in future times will meet with great Temptations, to divide them one from another; therefore I pray thee, Father, that they may be ſtrongly united together, that there may be as firm an Union as is poſſible betwixt them. This is enough, if I ſhould ſay no more, to ſhew the evil that is in Diviſions, that Chriſt did put up ſo many Petitions to prevent them. He doth not pray ſo much, that his Followers may be preſerv'd from the cruel Perſecutions of their Enemies, as

that

that they may be kept from uncharitable Contentions amongſt themſelves. Surely that Bleſſing is worth their utmoſt Care, as Chriſt counted worthy of his redoubled Prayer. Oh, let this ſerve to aggravate this Sin of Contention, that it is directly contrary, not only to the Command, but to the Solemn Prayer of our Lord. I might ſhew you, how Strife and Diviſion is againſt your own Prayers: You often pray, and pray hard for the Peace and Union of Chriſtians; but this is a powerful Conſideration indeed, that it is againſt the Deſire and Prayer of Jeſus Chriſt himſelf.

4. Contentions and Diviſions do greatly diſhonour Chriſt; his Name and Doctrine is hereby blaſphem'd; it makes our Hearts to bleed within us, to hear Chriſt reproach'd by the black Mouths of his Enemies, and nothing more opens them, than the Diviſions of his Friends and Followers.

'Tis worth your obſervation, that when Chriſt pray'd for the Union of his Followers, he back'd it with this Argument, that the World might believe and know, that he was ſent of the Father. So he ſays, *John* 17. 21. *Let them be one, that the World may believe, that thou haſt ſent me.* And again, Verſe 23. *Let them be perfect in one, that the World may know, that thou haſt ſent me.* As if he had ſaid, the Diviſions and Contentions of my Diſciples, will tempt the Men of the World to think, that I did not come out from thee; that I, who am their Lord and Maſter, am but an Impoſtor; that my Goſpel is but a Fable, and the Religion they have received from me, is but a Romance. If thoſe that believe in me are contentious, then ſtanders by will be Atheiſts. If there be no Love in the Church, there will be no Faith in the World. This one thing is ſufficient to proclaim the great evil of Strife and Diviſions, that they are ſo diſhonourable to Chriſt and to his Name. Who doth

not tremble, to have his hand in that which brings an apparent Reproach upon Chriſt and the Chriſtian Religion! Tis ſtoried of *Alexander Severus*, That ſeeing two Chriſtians at variance one with the other, he forbad them any longer to aſſume the Name of Chriſtians; becauſe that by their ſtriſe and contention, they diſhonour'd their Lord and Maſter. Oh, how many in the midſt of us, and round about us, might be interdicted the Chriſtian Name, for the ſame reaſon!

5. Which follows upon the former, Contentions and Diviſions do ſtumble and harden the ungodly; they keep ſome from entering into the good Ways of God, and they make others, that began to enter into them, to turn back. Two things in God's People become great Stumbling-blocks to the wicked; one is, their Scandalous Sins and Miſcarriages; the other is, their Fooliſh Strife and Diviſions. Theſe make wicked and ungodly Men ſhy of Religion, and of cloſing with the good Ways of God: They ſay, Look what Quarrels and Diviſions there are among theſe Profeſſors of Religion: God bleſs us from ſuch a Religion as this; if this be their Religion, thus to fall out and contend one with another, we will have nothing to do with it or them. God is a God of Peace and Love, and therefore ſuch contentious Perſons as theſe, can be none of his People. We complain ſometimes, that Converſion is a rare Work; that very few are converted and brought home to Chriſt in our days; whenas it is a wonder, conſidering our diviſions, that any at all are converted, that all don't keep at the greateſt diſtance from the Ways and People of God.

6. Contentions and Diviſions do grieve the Spirit of God, and the Spirits of thoſe that are truly godly. They grieve the Spirit of God; that peaceful Dove can't away with thoſe that are full of Gall and Bitterneſs. When the Apoſtle

Apoſtle had dehorted the *Epheſians* from grieving the Holy Spirit, *Epheſ.* 4 30. he immediately ſubjoyns this Exhortation, *Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath forgiven you.* Again, Theſe Diviſions do grieve and ſadden the Spirits of thoſe that are truly godly; nothing lieth nearer the Hearts of ſome good and godly Men, than the uncharitable Contentions of their Brethren; theſe Breaches do break their very Hearts; they are weary of their Lives, upon the account thereof, and are ready to wiſh, with that *German* Divine, That they were out of the World, that ſo they might be deliver'd from the implacable Enmities and Contentions of Miniſters and Chriſtians.

7. Contentions and Diviſions do ſtir up much corruption in Chriſtians, and they open a wide door to many other Sins: Solomon ſays, *Prov.* 17. 19. *He loveth tranſgreſſion, that loveth ſtrife*; he occaſions abundance of it in himſelf and in others alſo. There is a world of anger, envy, malice, and revenge in the hearts of Men, and contention gives them vent and draws them forth. The Apoſtle *James* ſays, *James* 3. 14. *If ye have bitter envyings and ſtrife, glory not.* Don't think or boaſt of your ſelves, to be ſuch good Chriſtians; theſe will ſtain all your other Excellencies, and will ſtir up all your other Corruptions. So it follows, Verſe 16. *Where envying and ſtrife is, there is confuſion and every evil work.* Strife and Contention is the Devil's Forge, and if he can give a Chriſtian a heat or two therein, he will quickly be ſoftned and made malleable for the Hammer of his Temptations. Meek *Moſes*, when he was a little heated, he ſpake unadviſedly with his Lips. Oh, the Lies and Slanders, the Whiſperings and Backbitings, the Cenſures and Detractions, that come out of

this Mint! From hence it is, that Chriſtians, inſtead of reproving, they fall a reproaching one another; inſtead of comforting, they fall a cenſuring one another; inſtead of provoking one another to love and good works, they provoke one another to anger and wrath and to other evil works.

2. The ſecond Direction is, To purſue thoſe things that promote Peace and Union. The Scripture in ſome places calls upon us to *purſue* and *follow Peace*; though it runs or flys from us, yet we muſt purſue and follow it. This Advice is given in *Heb.* 12. 14. 1 *Pet.* 3. 11. In both theſe places the *Greek* word doth ſignifie, to purſue or follow a thing eagerly, as Hunters do their Prey. And in one place we are requir'd not only to follow peace, but to follow after the things that make for peace. Where's that? Why, 'tis in *Rom.* 14. 19. There it is ſaid, *Let us follow after the things that make for peace:* (τὰ τῆς εἰρήνης) the things of peace; ſuch things are meant as are conducible and ſubſervient thereunto. The Lord help us to take out this Leſſon: Many pretend to be followers of peace, that decline the things that make for it. Let me deſcend unto particulars:

1. Make out after thoſe Graces that have an uniting property: Let theſe be in you, and abound. I told you before, that there are ſundry Luſts and Corruptions which occaſion Striſe and Diviſion: And now I will ſhew you, that there are ſundry Graces and gracious Qualifications, which conduce to Peace and Union.

1. There is the Grace of Love: I mean, Brotherly Love. This is of an uniting and knitting nature. We are ſaid, *Col.* 2. 2. to be *knit together in love.* This Grace obligeth Chriſtians to all acts of mutual kindneſs one to another; it expelleth Prejudices and Jealouſies; it extinguiſheth the unhallowed Fire of Anger and Wrath towards one another.

ther. The excellent Properties of Love are laid down at large, 1 *Cor.* 13. There it is ſaid, *That charity or love ſuffereth long, and is kind; it envieth not, it doth not behave it ſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not her own, is not eaſily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoyceth not in iniquity, but rejoyceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* Where is the Love to be found in our days, that is endu'd with theſe Properties? It is becauſe there is ſo little love, that there is ſo much ſtriſe and diviſion among us: Becauſe love is waxed cold, therefore Chriſtians are ſo ſick of the burning Feaver of Contention.

2. There is the Grace of Self-denial. Self is the great Make-bate, and Self-denial is the great Peace-maker. If Chriſtians could learn to deny themſelves, they would be at peace one with another. The Apoſtle exhorts the *Philippians*, in *Phil.* 2. 3. *to let nothing be done through ſtrife.* But how ſhould this be prevented? See what he adds in the next Verſe, *Look not every Man on his own things, but every Man alſo on the things of others.* Oh, what peaceable Times ſhould we have, if Chriſtians would love others as they love themſelves! There would be another World, if that Rule were but obſerv'd which you find in 1 *Cor.* 10. 24. *Let no Man ſeek his own, but every one another's wealth.*

3. There is the Grace of Humility. As Pride cauſeth, ſo Humility cureth Contentions and Diviſion. *Solomon* ſays, *Prov.* 28. 25. *He that is of a proud heart, ſtirreth up ſtrife.* But he that is of an humble and lowly Spirit, doth quench or extinguiſh it. We may ſay to Humility, what *Tertullus* ſaid to *Felix*, By thee we enjoy much quietneſs. But where are Chriſtians that now adays are *cloathed with Humility?* There would be an end of Strife, if we would put on this Garment, *If in lowlineſs of mind, each would eſteem others better than themſelves.* Vid. Phil. 2. 3.

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4. There is the Grace of Meekneſs. This hath a peace-making Property. It is mention'd in Scripture, as that which contributes greatly to Peace and Unity. *Epheſ.* 4. 2. There we are enjoyn'd *to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace:* And in order thereunto, *we muſt abound in all lowlineſs and meekneſs.* And to theſe we muſt add *long-ſuffering* and *forbearance*; ſo it follows in that Text. Ay, theſe are the Graces we muſt exerciſe our ſelves unto, and in, if we would keep the Peace amongſt Brethren. Theſe are uniting and adorning Graces; but theſe Ornaments are laid aſide, and quite out of faſhion in our times.

2. You muſt imbibe ſuch Principles as have an uniting property. Let me mention ſome few of theſe, and I will but mention them.

1. The firſt is, That Chriſtians ſhould be one in Affection, though they are of different Opinions in the leſſer Matters of Religion: If they have not altogether the ſame Mind, yet they ſhould *have the ſame Love.* That is the Apoſtle's Phraſe in *Phil.* 2. 2.

2. A ſecond is, That Peace is ſuch a precious Commodity, that we muſt purchaſe it whatſoever we pay for it. Whatſoever it coſts us, (provided we don't part with apparent Truth and true Holineſs) we have a good Bargain of it.

3. A third is, That in many caſes it is more honourable to yield, than to overcome: 'Tis a greater thing to have power over our ſelves, than to have power over others. The Story of two Philoſophers, *Ariſtippus* and *Æſchines*, is very memorable: When they were at variance, *Ariſtippus* came to *Æſchines*, and ſaid, *Come, ſhall we be Friends? Yes*, ſays *Æſchines*, *with all my heart. Now remember*, ſays *Ariſtippus*, *that though I am your Senior, yet I firſt ſought Peace. True*, ſays *Æſchines*; *and for this, I ſhall always acknowledge you the more worthy perſon; for I began the Strife, and you the Peace.*

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4. A fourth is, That 'tis better to be too mild and gentle, than to be too ſevere and rigorous: If lenity be at any time an error, 'tis an error on the right hand; 'tis by much the more eligible extream. Oh, how great a Vertue is Moderation!

5. A fifth is, That 'tis better to ſuffer the greateſt evil, than to do the leaſt. By the former, I may be miſchief'd by others; but by the latter, I miſchief my ſelf.

6. A ſixth is, The Weal of the Publick is to be preferr'd to our Perſonal Welfare. The Contentions and Diviſions that are amongſt Chriſtians, proceed from the narrowneſs of their Spirits; Men of Publick Spirits, are Men of Peaceable Spirits. Oh, what Halcion Days ſhould we ſee, if Chriſtians were poſſeſs'd of theſe and ſuch like Principles!

3. You muſt exerciſe and inure your ſelves to thoſe Practices, that have an uniting property. Let me touch alſo upon ſome of theſe.

1. Endeavour to take or make up Breaches betimes. Contentions, that are but ſparkles at firſt, if let alone, they will quickly grow into a great flame. How much have I ſeen a little Fire kindle? When Chriſtians fall out, one Perſon or Party, it may be, is faulty at firſt; but, by and by, ſuch as were faultleſs, are involv'd in the ſame guilt. *Solomon* ſays, *Prov.* 17. 14. That *the beginning of ſtrife, is as when one lets out water.* If it be not preſently ſtopt, it will bear down all before it. Oh, nip Contentions in the bud, or you know not to what they will grow, or how far they will ſpread!

2. Remember that good old Rule of our Saviour's, *To do to others, what you would have others to do to you.* This practice would ſet us all to rights. Would not you have others bear with you? Then do you bear with others. Would not you have others put the beſt Sence upon your Words

Words and Actions? Why then do you put the beſt Sence upon others Words and Actions. Would not you have others to reproach and back-bite you? Then don't you reproach and back-bite others. Do but walk by this Rule, and, as one ſays, your own Will, in a juſtifiable ſence, will be your Law.

3. Count all them your Brethren, in whom you ſee any thing of the image and likeneſs of your Father. Be of a catholick temper, and not wedded to a Party. Receive any that are ſerious in Religion, though they would reject you; and labour to pull thoſe to you, that thruſt you from them. Speak well of thoſe, that ſpeak evil of you. Let *Luther* call me Devil, (ſays *Calvin*) yet I will acknowledge him for an eminent Servant of God.

4. Accommodate your ſelves to others, as far as lawfully you may. Take the Apoſtle *Paul* for your Pattern; read what he ſaid and did, 1 *Cor.* 9. 19, 20, 21, 22. *Though I be free from all Men, yet have I made my ſelf a ſervant unto all, that I might gain the more. Unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without the law, as without law, (being not without the law to God, but under the law to Chriſt) that I might gain them that are without law; to the weak, I became as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all Men, that I might by all means ſave ſome.* All this while the Apoſtle was not guilty of neutrality and carnal compliance with others. Bleſſed *Paul!* if thou had'ſt liv'd in our days, thou would'ſt have been counted a Man of a trimming and temporizing Temper. Under this Head, let me commend one Practice to you, and that is, to ſubmit and yield to thoſe that are contentious, ſo far as you can do it with a ſafe Conſcience. The Apoſtle *Peter's* counſel ſhould be follow'd, 1 *Pet.* 5. 5. *Let the younger ſubmit themſelves to the elder,*

elder, yea, all of you be ſubject one to another. Many live as if there were no ſuch Text in their Bibles.

5. Learn the holy Art of bridling your Tongues: That little Member cauſeth much contention in the World and in the Church. What peaceable Times ſhould we ſee, if Chriſtians had the Grace to govern their Paſſions and refrain from paſſionate Expreſſions; if they did debate the things wherein they differ with hard Arguments and ſoft Words! *Solomon* ſaith, *Prov.* 15. 1. *That a ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath, but grievous words ſtir up anger.* We have a Proverb, *That hard to hard, never do well.* How much Striſe would be prevented and cur'd, if a Law of Kindneſs did command all our Mouths. Sometimes a boiſterous Wind is allay'd by a gentle Rain. Soft Words are as cheap as hard; gentle and courteous Language is as eaſie, as that which is ſowre or bitter.

6. Never contend about thoſe things which you do not fully underſtand. I might have mention'd Ignorance amongſt the Make-bates: This is certain, That moſt of our Peace-breakers are perſons that are very ignorant, that *know not what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm.* This may be truly ſaid, That moſt of our Contentions are meer Logomachies; the Striſe among us, for the moſt part, is about Words, and not Things. There was a great ſtrife of old between the Eaſtern and Weſtern Churches. The Eaſtern Churches and Chriſtians ſaid, there were three Subſiſtences in the Trinity, but not three Perſons. The Weſtern ſaid, there were three Perſons, but not three Subſiſtences. *Athanaſius* ſteps in and reconciles them both. The Contentions that were amongſt the *Neſtorians* and *Eutychians*, were only verbal, ſo that we may wonder, and ask, with the Apoſtle, *If there was not a wiſe Man among them?* And what ſhall I ſay of the Striſe and Diviſion that is among the more religious People of this Iſland, at this day? It is unac-

countable. A thinking Chriſtian is ready to wonder and ſay, Are there no wiſe Men, and indu'd with knowledge, that can with meekneſs of wiſdom compoſe theſe Differences that are among us? Are they all ſuch Fools as *Solomon* deſcribes? He ſays, *Prov.* 18. 6. *A Fool's lips enter into contention.* I can't ſay, that all the Debates in *England* and *London*, about Matters of Religion, are meerly verbal; but I dare affirm this of many, if not the moſt of them, nay, the greater part by far, of our litigant and contentious Chriſtians, can give no account of thoſe Points about which they contend, nor do they know the Hinges upon which the things in controverſie turn.

Here let me inſert a Story of modern date: Two Perſons lately met together, at a Friend's Houſe, where they had a great deal of warm Diſcourſe about thoſe that go under the denomination of *Presbyterians* and *Independents*: One ſtanding by, interpos'd, and deſir'd them to inform him, What was the real difference betwixt thoſe two Sorts or Parties. For a while there was deep ſilence, till anon he urg'd them to anſwer him, telling them, It was a moſt unſeemly thing, for perſons to contend about what they did not know or underſtand. At length one of them anſwer'd, The *Independents* were ſtricter in their admiſſion of Members into their particular Congregations than the others were. Hereupon the other reply'd, That, to his knowledge, that was falſe; foraſmuch as ſome, that had been rejected for ſcandalous Converſations by *Presbyterians*, had been receiv'd into *Independent* Congregations. This threw Oyl into the the Fire, and increas'd their warmth; till by and by this third perſon began ſharply to reprove them both, telling them, he expected to have heard of ſome difference in the Principles of theſe Parties, which might have made for his information; but all that he could hear, did amount to no more, than that there was a difference in the Practice

ctice of ſome particular Congregations, which would be in the moſt reformed Churches to the World's end. Therefore he deſir'd them to lay aſide thoſe unchriſtian Heats that were betwixt them, and not inveigh one againſt another, for they knew not what themſelves. And his Admonition was not ineffectual, for they parted good Friends, and in a better Temper.

7. Take out three Leſſons, that are taught us by the Apoſtle *Paul:* He gives us, in his Epiſtles, a Trinity of Precepts, that would cauſe Unity among Chriſtians, if they were but obſerv'd and learn'd.

The firſt is in 1 *Theſſ.* 4. 11. *Study to be quiet, and do your own buſineſs*, &c. Many ſtudy how they may be troubleſom, and neglecting their own affairs at home, they wander about from Houſe to Houſe; though they are idle, yet they are pragmatical and buſie-bodies too; they are tatlers alſo, their tongues never lie ſtill, *but are ſpeaking things which they ought not, they ſit and ſpeak againſt their brethren, and ſlander their own mothers children.* This was the fault of ſome Women in the Apoſtles times, but now Men are as faulty herein as Women. This Practice doth greatly contribute to the heightning and increaſing the Differences that are amongſt Chriſtians, and there is no better Remedy, than for all to follow the Apoſtle's Advice, *That every Man ſtudy to be quiet, and to do his own buſineſs.*

The ſecond is in *Rom.* 14. 22. *Haſt thou faith? have it to thy ſelf.* He doth not ſpeak of Faith here in the Fundamentals of Religion, but in indifferent things (which are the Subject-matter he is treating of.) Our belief or perſwaſion therein is not unſeaſonably to be utter'd, ſo as to occaſion ſcandal or contention. All Doctrins of Faith are not of that neceſſity, that they ſhould be urg'd at all times and upon all perſons. Though no truth muſt be deny'd,

yet many truths may be forborn. They that are zealous for truth, muſt remember that direction in *Epheſ.* 4. 15. *To ſpeak the truth in love*; or, as the words ſignifie, they muſt truth it in love.

The third is in *Phil.* 3. 15, 16. *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded, and if in any thing ye be otherwiſe minded, God ſhall reveal even this to you. Nevertheleſs, whereto we have already attain'd, let us walk by the ſame rule, let us mind the ſame thing.* I won't ſtay to open this Text, it is done to our hands, by ſeveral that have wrote purpoſely upon it: I will only add, that if theſe three Apoſtolical Rules were conſcientiouſly and ſtrictly obſerv'd, moſt of the Breaches among us would be heal'd, and future Ruptures in Churches and amongſt Chriſtians would be prevented.

8. Be humbled for Strife and Diviſion, and ſupplicate Heaven for Peace and Union.

1. Be humbled for Strife and Diviſion. Many rejoyce, but do you mourn by reaſon hereof: Whil'ſt others bring Fewel to increaſe, do you bring Tears to quench the Fire that is kindled amongſt Chriſtians. If you have no hand in Diviſions, yet let your Hearts be broken for them. I will allude to that place in the Book of *Judges*, *For the Diviſions of* Reuben, *let there be great Sorrow of Heart.*

2. Supplicate Heaven, the God of Heaven, for Peace and Union. Beſeech the God of Love and Peace, to pour down the Spirit of Love and Peace upon his Church and People. To this you are exhorted, *Pſal.* 122. 6. *Pray for the Peace of Jeruſalem; they ſhall proſper that love thee.* Say, *Peace be within thy Walls, and Proſperity within thy Palaces. For your Brethren and Companions ſake*, ſay now, *Peace be within thee.* Pray for the Churches and Chriſtians in our days, as the Apoſtle *Paul* doth for the *Theſſalonians*, 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 16. *The Lord of Peace give them Peace always, by*

by all means. This is a Service that every one may and ought to have a hand in. This is a Bleſſing that God can eaſily beſtow upon his People; nothing is hard, much leſs impoſſible unto him, *he can make Men to be of one Mind in a Houſe*; and he can make his Children to be of one Mind in his Houſe. He brake down *the middle Wall of Partition* betwixt *Jews* and *Gentiles, and of twain made one:* He can do the like among diſſenting and contending Chriſtians. This is that which he hath promis'd. He hath ſaid, That in the later days *his People ſhall dwell in peaceable Habitations*, Iſai. 32. 18. That the *Wolf ſhall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard ſhall lye down with the Kid: The Cow and the Bear ſhall feed, their young ones ſhall lye down together, and the Lion ſhall eat Straw like the Ox*; *and the ſucking Child ſhall play on the hole of the Aſp, and the weaned Child ſhall put his Hand on the Cockatrice-den*; *and that they ſhall not hurt, nor deſtroy in all his Holy Mountain*, Iſai. 11. 7, 8, 9. He hath ſaid, *Verſe* 13. *That the Envy of Ephraim ſhall depart, and the Adverſaries of Judah ſhall be cut off*; *that Ephraim ſhall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim.* He hath ſaid, *That Judah and Ephraim* (though two Sticks) *ſhall be joyn'd one to another into one Stick, and they ſhall become one in his hand*, Ezek. 37. 16, 17. And he hath farther promis'd, *That he will turn to his People a pure Language, and they ſhall ſerve him with one conſent*, or ſhoulder. Zeph. 3. 9. *That he will give them one Heart and one Way.* Theſe and divers other Promiſes God hath made of this ſort, which he likes his People ſhould plead, and put him in remembrance of. I wiſh I could ſay, that this Generation ſhall not paſs away, till theſe things come to paſs: But conſidering the improbability of ſuch a Bleſſing for the preſent, I fear I may take up *Balaam*'s words, and ſay, *Who ſhall live, when God will do this?* In mean time, what reaſon have we to beſiege Heaven, and apply to God by

Faſt-

Faſting and Prayer, (to do this together, and to do this apart) that God would cauſe theſe Janglings and Contentions, that are among his People, to ceaſe? If ſome Plague or Drought came upon us, we ſhould reckon it high time to Faſt and Pray. Yet theſe (as one obſerves) are in themſelves but Miſeries; when our Contentions are ſo our Miſeries, that they are alſo our Sins. It may be, theſe Devils of Striſe and Diviſion, will be driven out no other way, but by Faſting and Prayer.

Let me conclude all with a double Exhortation.

The firſt is to thoſe that are Miniſters. They are the Ambaſſadors of Peace; they are ſent by him who is the Prince of Peace; therefore they ſhould uſe their utmoſt Endeavours to prevent and remove all Striſe and Diviſions. Yet, how it comes to paſs I know not, they are many times the greateſt promoters thereof. One hath obſerv'd, That there are few Rents and Contentions in Churches in which Miniſters have not the chief hand. *Jerome* hath a remarkable Note upon *Hoſea* 9. 8. He ſaith (*Veteres ſcrutans Hiſtorias, nullos invenire poſſum ſcidiſſe eccleſiam præter eos qui Sacerdotes a Deo poſiti fuerunt.*) ſearching the ancient Hiſtories, *I can find none, that have rent the Church like thoſe that ſuſtain the Office of Miniſters.* This is a ſad Charge, and it is too juſtly laid upon many of that Order. *Luther* pray'd, that the Church might be deliver'd from ſundry Evils, and among the reſt, (*a paſtore contentioſo*) from contentious Preachers or Paſtors. It touch'd me to the quick the other day, to hear one tell me, *That we, who are Miniſters, are the cauſe of all the Contentions that are in City and Country at this day.* I thought with my ſelf, there was too much of truth in what he ſaid. If we would unite and agree, our Hearers would unite and agree likewiſe; generally it is, like Paſtors, like People: They are (*tuba inflata*) a ſounding Trumpet; they ſound according to the

the Breath we breath into them, either a Retreat or an Onſet, a Parly or an Alarum. Oh, how inexcuſable are we that teach others, ſhould be peaceable, and be our ſelves turbulent! We are like Phyſicians, that preſcribe ſuch Rules to their Patients, as they never obſerve themſelves. It will never be well with us, till we give our Hearers a large and fair Copy of Peace and Unity in our own Practices.

2. I would exhort private Chriſtians to this Duty, to follow after Peace, and the things that make for it. *If it be poſſible, as much as in you lieth, have peace with all Men,* and eſpecially one with another. Let me exhort you, as the Apoſtle *Paul* doth theſe *Corinthians:* Hear what he ſays to them, in his firſt Epiſtle, Chap. 1. 10. *I beſeech you, Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there be no diviſions among you, but that ye be perfectly joyn'd together in the ſame mind and in the ſame judgment.* Hear what he ſays to them in his ſecond Epiſtle, Chap. 13. 11. *Finally, Brethren, farewel: Be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace ſhall be with you.* Oh, that this Exhortation could reach all the Chriſtians in *England* and in *London!* Oh, that every Pulpit in this Kingdom and City did ring with this Meſſage! Peace and Union is that which all ſeem to deſire. (*Pacem te poſcimus omnes.*) Ask every Man in this Congregation, or in this City, Have you any hand in the Striſe and Diviſions that are among us? and he will anſwer, No, not I. Again, ask any one, Don't you deſire Peace and Love and Union among your Brethren and Neighbours? and he will anſwer, Yes, I do. But though all ſeem to deſire it, how few be they that do really endeavour it? or that will be at any coſt or pains to accompliſh it? all exclaim againſt Striſe and Diviſion, but though every one cries out of the Thief, who will be at the trouble to ſtop him?

Give

Give me leave now, in the cloſe of all, to commend to you ſome moving Conſiderations.

1. Conſider what God is. He is (as was ſaid before) *the God of Love and Peace*; he's call'd, 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 23. *the very God of Peace.* And in 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 16. *the Lord of Peace himſelf.* The Son of God, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, he is the *Prince of Peace.* He is *King of Salem*; which is, by interpretation, King of Peace. His entering into this World was ſolemniz'd with a Song of Peace; whil'ſt he ſtaid in this World, *he preach'd and made Peace.* When he departed out of this World, he bequeath'd unto his Followers the precious Legacy of Peace. The holy Spirit of God, is the great worker of Peace; Peace is one of the Fruits of the Spirit. There is a cluſter of theſe Fruits in *Gal.* 5. 22. there's Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs. What ſweet Fruits are here? Many Chriſtians live as if they had never taſted any of them. Well, but what an Argument is here to provoke us to peaceableneſs? This is to make us like unto God, to reſemble Father, Son and Spirit. Oh, how contrary do they walk to God, who walk in Strife and Contention!

2. Conſider what you are, and profeſs to be. You are *the Children, the Sons and Daughters of Peace. You are call'd to Peace,* 1 Cor. 7. 15. You have Peace with God, and therefore you ſhould have Peace one with another; you are going to one Home, and therefore you ſhould not fall out by the Way: Why ſhould there be Strife betwixt *Abraham* and *Lot*, ſeeing they were Brethren? Oh conſider, Chriſtians, you are Children of the ſame Father, Members of the ſame Body, Profeſſors of the ſame Faith, Partakers of the ſame Spirit, Retainers to the ſame Lord, you have the ſame Baptiſm and hope of your Calling, and if you fall out, who ſhall agree? You ſhould be looped together, as the Curtains of the Tabernacles were; you ſhould be all of a piece. *Vid.* Mal. 2. 10.

3. Con-

3. Conſider where you are, and among whom you live. They are not all your Friends that ſtand by and look upon you, whil'ſt you diſcover your ſhame and nakedneſs; no, they are many of them your Enemies, and though they carry it fair outwardly, yet they inwardly hate you: And whil'ſt you contend and quarrel one with another, they laugh in their ſleeves, and are ready to ſay, *Aha! ſo would we have it.* It was an aggravation of the folly of *Abraham* and *Lot's* Herdſmen and Servants, that they ſhould ſtrive together, and one with another, *when the Canaanite and the Perizite dwelt in the Land.* You know how to apply it.

4. Conſider what the end of theſe things is like to be. Our Contentions are ſad Prognoſticks of ſome impending Judgment. One ſays well, That a lowring Sky, ſhews foul Weather to be at hand. So the lowring Countenances and contentious Carriages of Chriſtians towards one another, do indicate a Storm to be near us. When the Vail of the Temple was rent in twain, it was a fore-runner of the deſtruction of the Temple. *Cambden* obſerves, that the Diviſions of the *Engliſh* was the Scaling-ladder by which the *Romans* came into *England.* If the Romaniſts come among us again, they'll part the fray, and end the ſtrife among us. If we ſhould ſee again the Marian Days, or have a Popiſh Prince, I am confident the Epiſcopal and Eraſtian would agree together and the Presbyterian and Independent would embrace one another. If Chriſtians *bite and devour one another*, God will be provok'd to give them up to be devour'd of others. *Vid.* Mal. 4. 6. *If God turn not the Heart of the Fathers to the Children, and the Heart of the Children to the Fathers*, and the Heart of Chriſtians one to another, *he will come and ſmite the Earth with a Curſe.*

5. Conſider what Rebukes you have been lately under, for your former Contentions and Diviſions: How great were your felt and feared Troubles? You are as Brands

juſt now pluck'd out of the burning; the ſmell of the Fire is yet upon you: And will you, as ſoon as the Rod is off your Backs, return to your old work again? Remember the Reſolutions you had, and the Promiſes you made, if ever *God again ſhould turn back your captivity.* Read, when you have leaſure, *Ezra* 9. from Verſe 5. to the end.

6. Conſider what Harmony and Agreement there is among others. *Gebal and Ammon and Amalek can confederate and joyn together with one conſent.* Thieves and Murderers can *caſt in their Lot together, and have all one Purſe.* The very Devils have concord among themſelves, *Satan is not divided againſt Satan.* Yea, Lions and Tygers, the fierceſt and wildeſt Beaſts, will live peaceably one with another. (*Sævis inter ſe convenit urſis.*) This Conſideration may help to lay our Animoſities and Contentions. But,

7. Conſider what Harmony and ſweet Accord all the Saints have and ſhall have in Heaven. There are no Storms and Tempeſts in that upper Region: There *Luther* and *Zwinglius* are perfectly reconcil'd.

8. Conſider what a lame Account we ſhall be able to give to Chriſt at his coming, of theſe our Contentions and Diviſions. We can't give any rational account of them now, but how ſpeechleſs ſhall we be then? Read *Matth.* 24. 48, 49, 50, 51.

9. Conſider the good and benefit of Peace and Union. It is pleaſing to God; it is a credit to the Goſpel; it is a powerful Load-ſtone to draw the World to Chriſt, like Cummin-ſeed, it makes the Doves to flock the Windows; it promotes Edification among Chriſtians; the Church *edifies it ſelf in love.*

10. Conſider the evil and harm of Strife and Diviſion. Much hath been ſaid of this already: See the firſt general Direction: Let me only add, That it greatly gratifies the Devil;

Devil; he is pleas'd to ſee them, who are reconcil'd to God, to be at variance among themſelves; How glad is he, when he can perſwade Chriſt's Followers to do more than his Crucifiers did; that is, to rend his ſeamleſs Coat? This Contention and Diviſion amongſt Chriſtians, hinders their growth in Grace: The Body and the Members thereof do never thrive and grow in a Feaver; it cuts off all their entercourſe with Heaven; hereby Prayers are hindred; they will be little in Prayer to God, who are much in ſquabling one with another; yea, it hinders all mutual Edification; it ſpoils all Chriſtian Entercourſe and Converſe: One ſays well, It is as baneful to Chriſtian Communion, as a great Plague or Peſtilence is to a Market-town.

Let me then reſume my Exhortation: Chriſtians, I do, in Chriſt's Name and Words, beſeech you, *To have Peace one with another*. Oh, beware of Striſe and Diviſion! Mark and avoid them (whoever they be) that are the cauſes thereof.

Let me end with that pathetical Obteſtation of the Apoſtle *Paul*, *Phil.* 2. 1, 2. *If there be any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the ſpirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the ſame love, being of one accord and of one mind.* To which let me add that Prayer of the ſame Apoſtle, *Rom.* 15. 5, 6. *Now the God of patience and conſolation, grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Chriſt Jeſus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

The Reader may take notice,

1. THat more is printed than was preach'd, especially towards the latter end.

2. Tho' I have spoken much of the Causes and Divisions in general, yet I have spoken little of the Causes of our Strife and Divisions in particular; that is a *Noli me tangere*. No near, says the Sailer.

3. I expect to be censur'd by some, for what I have said; 'tis a thankless Office to attempt the reconciling of persons at variance; 'tis to take a Dog by the Ears; 'tis to interpose between angry Duellers. Μισῶ ἀπ' ἀμφοῖιν κακὸν πάσιν, *Nazianz.* 'Tis to put ones Hand into a Nest of Hornets.

4. I almost despair of seeing the hurt of the Daughter of my People heal'd, and their Divisions cur'd, while I live. And when I medled with this Argument, I thought of the Saying of one to *Luther*, when he first set about the Work of Reformation, *What dost thou mean? thou wilt but beat the Air.* Abi in cellam tuam, & dic miserere Deus nostri.

5. There are several useful Discourses extant upon this Subject, in our own Language; from some of which, I have borrowed some Notions, if not Expressions; *viz.* Mr. *Burrows's Irenicum*, Mr. *Baxter's* Cure of Church-Divisions, Mr. *Steele* against Uncharitable Contentions in the Church of God, Mr. *How's* Carnality of Religious Contention, and his Attempt to allay Animosities among Protestants, Mr. *Flavel's* Gospel-Unity, Mr. *Culverwel's* Schism, Mr. *Gurnal's* Compleat Armour, from Page 149, to 159. Mr. *Vincent's* design to revive Love, *&c.*

6. Let none be offended at what is said, Page 12. about God's having a hand in the Divisions of his People: This is consistent with his Holiness and hatred of Sin, it doth not make him the Author of it. *Vid.* Acts 2. 23. and 4. 27, 28. and Mr. *Strong's* Treatise, shewing the Subordination of the Will of Man to the Will of God; from Page 202, to 214.

7. There are some Literal Errors of the Press, which may easily be corrected or overlook'd; *e.g.* In p. 3. for discanted, r. descanted. p. 6. for *Antinomean*, r. *Antinomian.* p. 8. for heighth, r. heigth. p. 19. for them, r. these. p. 21. for others, r. other.

FINIS.

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